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Contact: Kendra Barkoff, DOI (202) 208-6416

Interior Extends Opportunity for Public Input on Environmental Analysis of 2012-2017 Oil and Gas Leasing Program

WASHINGTON, DC — Citing the need to proceed cautiously on the Outer Continental Shelf and to review safety and environmental issues associated with offshore drilling, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today that Interior is postponing public scoping meetings for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2012–2017 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program until later in 2010.

“Offshore oil and gas production will remain an important component of our nation’s energy portfolio as we transition to a clean energy economy,” said Salazar, “but we must ensure that decisions about development are based on safe operations, ensuring protection of the environment, using the best science, and engaging in an open and transparent process.”

“We remain focused on responding to the BP oil spill and implementing strong reforms that are raising the bar for the oil and gas industry,” said Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Regulation and Enforcement (BOEM) Director Michael Bromwich. “At the appropriate time, we will begin the process of engaging the public, conducting environmental analysis, and looking ahead to where and how to responsibly develop oil and gas resources under the next five year program.”

On April 2, 2010, the Department of the Interior published a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2012–2017 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program that included the Mid- and South Atlantic; Western, Central, and a portion of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico; and the Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Cook Inlet, Alaska OCS areas. The Notice of Intent stated that public meetings would be held in coastal locations near these areas in June and early July 2010. The purpose of these public scoping meetings is to help determine the appropriate scope for the geographical areas and issues to be included in the EIS.

The postponement of these meetings is consistent with recent announcements by the Department of the Interior to review safety and environmental issues associated with the OCS program while moving forward with prudent planning for the 2012-2017 Program by gathering public input and conducting environmental analyses. *A Federal Register*

notice will be published later this year identifying a new public comment period along with dates and locations for the scoping meetings.

Comments received in the public comment period that closes today and comments received under the new public comment period will all be considered by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement as part of the EIS scoping process.

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